

# RE MEM BER WHEN

## Missing boat found capsized; no sign any aboard survived

A Coast Guard cutter reached an overturned cabin cruiser that had been missing in heavy seas with six persons aboard today, and reported it found no sign of life.

The cutter Point Carrow radioed that it was standing by the capsized boat while two helicopters and two fixed wing aircraft searched the area for possible survivors.

A Coast Guard helicopter spotted the cabin cruiser Sure Bet 20 miles due west of Point Fermin after a search for the missing boat was resumed at

daybreak. A boat nearby, the Dilly Dilly IV, confirmed that it was the Sure Bet.

Point Fermin is in the Los Angeles Harbor area, about 60 miles east-southeast of Anacapa Island where the vessel ran into fierce winds Thursday.

Winds sent breakers up to 25 feet high crashing on the coast in the area Thursday and yesterday.

The owner of the Sure Bet, Raymond Bunch, 51, of Ojai, said in a radio distress call at 4:50 p.m. Thursday that the vessel's engine had failed.

Also aboard were Bunch's wife, Mary, 48; Mrs. Frances Wadell, 49, of Ojai, and her son, Lee, 26; and Dennis Braeton, 27, and his wife, Debbie, 24, visitors from Michigan.

The 22-foot vessel, an inboard-outboard motor boat, was not seen nor heard from after the 4:50 p.m. radio message Thursday until it was spotted late this morning.

The Sure Bet and its passengers had left Channel Islands Harbor at Oxnard Thursday on a fishing trip to Santa Cruz Island. After the distress mes-

sage was received, the 85-foot Coast Guard Cutter Point Judith, operating out of Oxnard, attempted a rescue mission but was damaged by the storm and forced to turn back.

Joining the search today was a four-engine C-130 from San Francisco and a number of other air and surface vessels fanning out over an area that extended as far south as San Clemente Island.

Winds had receded before today's search began, and visibility had improved considerably.

## AN EXPERIENCE THAT SBYC MEMBER, MIKE GRUA WILL NEVER FORGET

**And now the back story...***From the log of the Santana 22, "Sea Linguist." Somewhat edited and streamlined for readability purposes.*

**April 13, 1976:** Destination Coches Prietos Anchorage. ETD 0800. Sailed/motored all the way there and put out bow and stern anchors.

**4/14:** Swam, soaked up the sun and ate our fill of abalone. SW winds clocking around to the NW by dusk with 20-25k during the night. The next day a cruising boat which had also been in the anchorage that night left for the west end of the island and Forney's anchorage but returned a couple of hours later with tales of "lots of wind."

**4/15:** Went hiking with the wind W-NW at 20-25k and as we descended to the beach in the late afternoon I saw my Avon dingy, which had been pulled up on the beach about 50 yards from the water and turned over, start blowing out of the cove. I raced down but was too late to catch it. There was a 24' inboard/outboard pulled up on the beach with the passengers scattered around pulling black abalone off the rocks since it was low tide. I ran up to the person who looked like he might be the skipper and asked him if he would take me out to retrieve my Avon. He grumbled a bit and said that he was going to gather all his friends in the boat before he would shove off. Finally, all the folks were onboard and we put out to chase the Avon. The wind was blowing about 30k straight down from the spine of the island creating 6' wind waves. The Avon was doing cartwheels but we reached it about a mile off shore and wrestled it onboard. As we came toward the anchorage it was quite evident that if the wind was this strong on the south side of the island it would be terrible on the other side. I suggested that they stay

on the island because of what the wind would be like between the east end and Ventura, but the skipper was adamant about getting back to Ojai. I did have the peace of mind to bring my oars along and as I got in the dingy, thanking every one and bidding them bon voyage, I saw the skipper raise a half gallon of Old Crow bourbon and take a big drink of it. And with that, the "Sure Bet" took off for San Pedro Point on the east end of Santa Cruz. After another great abalone dinner I stuck my head out of the hatch and noticed that the big bluff that was on the port side of the boat when I went below for dinner was now on the starboard side. Hoping that what I was seeing might have something to do with wine, I was quickly disabused of that notion when I saw that the direction of pointy end of the boat was toward the beach, not toward the ocean as it should be. The stern cleat holding the anchor rode had broken but luckily my bow anchor had done an admirable about face and was holding firmly. The three of us did anchor watches that night and were awakened by the drone of Coast Guard planes overhead which seemed to be searching for something. Not having a vhf radio in those days, I was able to tune into KIST on my little AM portable radio and our suspicions were confirmed...the CG was searching for a boat named "Sure Bet" which had sent one Mayday call and then nothing more.

Addendum: A few days after the boat was found one female body was located off Pt. Vicente (Palos Verdes peninsula) and another female body washed up in Santa Monica Bay. The one thing that has always stuck with me about that experience is that I was the last person to see those 7 people on "Sure Bet" alive.... May they rest in peace.

Mike Grua